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Democratic Theory and the Practice of Intersectionality – Gender and Diversity in the European Public Sphere¹

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Introduction

The paper addresses the challenge of the ‘the turn to diversity’ for feminist theory and research. Democratic theory has recently put accommodation of cultural and religious diversity and discrimination of minority groups on the research agenda. There has been a similar ‘intersectional turn’ in feminist theory concerned with understanding multiple differences and complex inequalities. The objective is to explore the potentials of intersectional approaches to rethink deliberative democracy by focusing on multiple inequalities, conflicts and contestation. The empirical focus is on intersections of diversity and gender in the European public sphere.

The first part gives a brief overview of the classical criticisms of deliberative approaches to democracy and proposals to re-think democracy ‘from below’ to include women and minorities. It discusses recent proposals to rethink deliberation addressing inclusion/exclusion of women and marginalized social groups. The deliberative approach has inspired visions of inclusive democracy but it has been criticized for neglecting conflicts, power relations, multiple differences and inequalities among women as well as between women and marginalized social groups (Mouffe 1993; Squires,

¹ The paper is inspired by results from the Eurosphere project, where we both participate. The EUROSHERE project :‘Diversity and the European Public Sphere: Towards a Citizens’ Europe?’, European Commission’s, 6th framework programme (2007-2012) aims at analysing the possibilities and barriers of articulating a European public sphere as an inclusive space of citizen involvement and political participation. It is a further elaboration of some of the points developed in: Lise Rolandsen Agustin & Birte Siim: “Democracy, Diversity and Contestation: A Transnational European Perspective” (fortc. 2011) and Monika Mokre & Birte Siim: “Inclusion and Exclusion in the European Public Sphere. Intersections of Gender and Race” prepared for the journal *JAVNOST* (fortc. 2011). The final results from the gender work package will be published in Monika Mokre & Birte Siim (eds.): *Intersections of Gender and Diversity in the European Public Sphere*, Palgrave (fortc 2012).

2007). Feminist scholars have introduced intersectionality as an alternative approach to deal with multiple differences and inequalities. Arguably this approach has the potential to overcome the bias of liberal pluralism and place power, conflicts and contestation at the centre of democratic theory and practice (Yuval-Davis 2007; Ferree 2009).

The second part focuses on the intersections of diversity and gender in the European public sphere and discusses proposals to include differences, conflicts and contestations in democracy. It next explores the tensions between diversity and gender by using empirical data collected and analysed within the Eurosphere project in order to further develop the intersectionality approach². The final section discusses the implications of the results from the Eurosphere project for intersectionality .

Part 1: Rethinking of deliberative democracy

This part addresses the rethinking of the public sphere from the double perspective of gender and diversity. It first briefly reviews the main criticisms of the Habermasian approach to the public sphere and presents the major feminist proposals to include women and marginalised social groups in democracy (Fraser 2007; Young 2000). Next it presents Chantal Mouffe's critique of deliberative democracy and discusses the alternative model for an agonistic pluralism.

Inclusion/exclusion of women and marginalized social groups

The following section presents the main points in the critique of deliberative democracy and the alternative models to include women and marginalized social groups in democratic theory (Ferree 2002). The emphasis is on the work of two influential scholars, which have both emphasised that difference and diversity plays a crucial role for democratic deliberation, Nancy Fraser's and Iris Marion Young (Fraser 1990; 2007; Young 1990, 2000).

² The Eurosphere project has conducted elite interviews with respondents from political parties, social movements/NGOs, think tanks, and media in 16 European countries. The national country reports, working papers and other documents are available on the project website: <http://eurospheres.org/>

Deliberative theory has inspired inclusive models of democracy, which have raised critical questions about the exclusion/inclusion of marginalized social groups. The debate about the rethinking of the public sphere has identified issues along four different dimensions (Ferree et. al., 2002):

- *Who* should participate and on what occasions?
- *What* should be the form and content of their contributions to the public discourse?
- *How* should the actors communicate with one another?
- *What* are the desired outcomes of the process?

From a historical and comparative perspective the public sphere is perceived as a social sphere next to the institutions of markets, states and families, and the economy, the political and the private/intimate are perceived as the main spheres of human activity³. From a gender perspective the *public/private* divide is identified as one of the key problems for women's inclusion as equal citizens, and the *private family* with its cultural practices, norms and values, about marriage and divorce is perceived as a crucial 'political' arena for reproducing unequal gender roles (Fraser 1990). *Civil society* is perceived as another crucial arena for empowerment of women's political agency (Young 1990).

Both Fraser's and Young's criticism of the Habermasian public sphere model is inspired by a social constructionist approach; an emphasis on the contingent nature of every aspect of the political process (Ferree et al 2002: 307) and on the power of discourse. Both are critical of the model's idealization of the public sphere claiming that the universalist ideal of the public sphere hides particularism and oppresses diversity and difference. Their alternative public sphere models are therefore based upon principles of *heterogeneity and diversity* that recognize and empower women and marginalised social groups; emphasize the key role of civil society, and perceive interactions between the public and private arena of the family as a crucial element in the creation of a democratic public sphere (Fraser 1990). In spite of these similarities there are a number of differences worth emphasising.

³ Sylvia Walby (2010) has recently added violence as a fourth dimension to the three classical arenas.

Nancy Fraser's alternative model for a new post-bourgeois conception aims to expand democracy and decentre politics from parliament to civil society. One of the objectives is to include the *concerns and issues* of women and marginalised social groups in democracy. This model has four elements: 1) an emphasis on social inequality, 2) expansion of the notion of the public from a single public sphere to a multiplicity of publics, 3) inclusion of 'private' interests and issues and 4) a differentiation between strong and weak publics (Fraser 1990: 77). Fraser's model for social justice is thus premised upon three normative principles: *Redistribution, recognition and democratic parity* (2003) that link social equality, cultural diversity and participatory democracy.

Fraser's model presents a universal frame tied to the nation state, which does not address the particularities of places and spaces. Her recent work breaks with this frame and explores the challenges to notions of normative legitimacy and political efficacy in a post-Westphalian world (2007). It discusses the potentials required for developing a critical and democratizing role for the transnational public spheres focusing on changes in the *inclusiveness condition* of who participates and in the *parity condition* of how the actors engage with one another (20). If inclusiveness is interpreted as 'the all-affected principle', it challenges national political citizenship as the condition for inclusion and legitimacy and becomes an argument for *transnational public spheres*. She finds that a public sphere theory that wants to serve as a critical theory must rise to the double challenge: to create new, transnational public powers and to make them accountable to new, transnational public spheres (23). These reflections add a trans-national dimension to Fraser's model necessary to analyse the contradictory nature of inclusiveness and legitimacy dimension in the creation of EU-polity.

Iris Marion Young's normative democratic model of the public sphere aims to give voice and influence to diverse sectors of the public sphere 'from below'. Young's communicative theory of democracy (1990) is a comprehensive approach based upon difference and diversity, which aims to include marginalised social groups in democracy through mobilisation and organisation in civil society. The central dimension is democratic *communication*, which she proposes should be expanded in two ways:

- 1) Diversity in social perspectives, culture or particularistic adhesions must be seen as resources for the democratic debate rather than a sign of division that needs to be overcome.
- 2) Democratic communication must be expanded to include not only rational arguments but many different forms of communication like greetings, rhetoric and stories (Young 1996: 120).

Young's social constructivist approach presents a strong critique of universal models of democracy for being exclusive and normative, because they do not include diversity between women and between social groups and do not challenge existing race- and class privileges. They tend to neglect the new differentiations based upon race/ethnicity, sexuality and generation, new political projects and new overlapping identities.

Young's approach presents a strong normative vision of a pluralist and differentiated democracy based upon a *heterogeneous public*. This model links democratic principles of inclusion of diversity with a multidimensional approach to power that focus on structural power relations as well as the 'empowerment' of marginalised social groups (Young 1990, 2000). Civil society plays a primary role in this discursive and communicative approach to democracy, where 'communication action' and the dynamic interaction of actors as 'agents of change and agency of change' is the basis of the public sphere. Political communication is (re-)defined as – 'touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, talking, writing, gesturing and reading', although speaking, writing, listening, and reading are the most common ways to communicate. Young's approach is not only concerned with discourses, rules and social norms in the dominant cultural and political institutions within which the public sphere is articulated, but acknowledges that communication and dialogue is limited by the dominant discourses. The strength of this approach is the emphasis on unequal power relations, violence, rape and women's oppression in the private and public arena.

The two approaches have similar concerns for inclusion of gender and diversity as a condition for the creation of real pluralism in democratic politics. Both are premised on the belief that women and marginalised social groups can contribute to invigorate political life, because they bring new issues and concerns onto the public agenda. In spite of this emphasis on diversity and power relations they tend to idealize women and marginalised social groups and thus fail to conceptualize multiple

differences and inequalities or explore differences and inequalities among women; conflicts between women and marginalised social groups; between women's organisations and minority organisations.

Mouffe's approach to democracy - difference, contestation and conflict

Laclau and Mouffe have presented a radical critique of the rational perspective of the deliberative approach, because it fails to address the power of the ruling class in contemporary post-industrial societies. Mouffe's own analysis of the modern 'democratic paradox' (2000) is informed by post-structuralism and deconstruction. The main thesis is that conflict and division are inherent to politics and that the basic tensions between equality and liberty cannot be reconciled. *The paradoxical nature of democracy refers to the fact that it is legitimate to establish limits to popular sovereignty in the name of liberty.* Modern democracy represents a contingent historical articulation between two traditions with different logics, which may conflict: the principle of the sovereignty of the people and the liberal discourse, 'the symbolic framework' within which this democratic rule is exercised, i.e. the liberal discourse with its strong emphasis on the value of individual liberty and human rights (introduction pp. 1-16). Only by acknowledging this democratic paradox is it possible to deal with it. According to Mouffe the very legitimacy of liberal democracy is based upon the idea of popular sovereignty, a 'demos', and the devaluation of this concept leads to a democratic deficit which makes, i. e. the mobilisation of such an idea by right-wing populist politicians possible.

The conflict between inclusion-exclusion of social groups thus plays an important role in Mouffe's approach. Conflict and division is thus inherent to politics, and therefore an alternative pluralism is needed called 'agonistic pluralism', which recognizes confrontation between conflicting interpretations of the constitutive liberal-democratic values, for example between left and right (pp.9-16): "By constantly challenging the relations of inclusion-exclusion implied by the political constitution of 'the people'... a liberal discourse of universal human rights plays an important role in maintaining the democratic contestation alive" (p. 10). In Mouffe's approach antagonism can never be eliminated from politics, which is premised upon a difference between us/them. The crucial task for democratic politics is thus to create the conditions that would make antagonism, i.e. the

differentiation between friend and enemy, less likely. This model makes a crucial distinction between antagonism proper between enemies, and 'agonism' between adversaries or 'friendly enemies'.

Mouffe's vision is a radical democracy with competing forms of identification linked to the different interpretations of the *res publica*, allowing for a plurality of different allegiances and for the respect of individual liberty (1993; 235-38). This model aims to deepen democracy by the creation of political identities, or belongings, as radical democratic citizens premised on collective forms of identification among the democratic demands found in a variety of movements; women, workers, black, gay, ecological as well as several other 'new social movements'. From this perspective the public/private divide is not abandoned but reformulated in a way that does not correspond to discreet separate spheres. According to Mouffe the concern with equality and liberty should inform the citizens' actions in all areas of social life.

To sum up: Mouffe's approach provides a strong argument for conceptualizing conflicts and struggles about the polity, which presents a radicalization of Fraser and Young's models. In spite of this, it is still based upon a homogeneous image of the 'new social movements', which fails to address power relations, inequalities and conflicts within the new social movements, for example within and between women's organizations and ethnic minority organizations.

Gender, Diversity and Democratic Intersectionality

The following presents some of the main points in the feminist intersectionality approach from a perspective of democratic diversity, focusing on issues pertaining intersections of gender with ethnicity/race. It argues that the intersectionality approach needs to address the dual challenge from diversity and trans-nationalism.

Intersectionality is an open and contested term, which aims to address multiple forms of inequality, difference and diversity and to conceptualize the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, class and other categories of difference in social and political theory (Squires 2007; Verloo 2006, 2007). The theory needs to be developed further from the perspective of democratic diversity, since only a few

scholars have started to reflect upon the meanings and implications of intersectionality for democratic theory and research (see Yuval- Davis 2006; 2007).

One inspiration is Judith Squires (2007), who has recently discussed the concept of intersectionality arguing that intersectionality must be understood as a *constitutive* process based on communication between social and political actors and the creation of new collective identities (Squires 2007; 161-63). This approach emphasises the dynamic and conflictual processes of democratic communication between social and political groups.

Another inspiration is Myra Marx Ferree (2009), who has proposed an institutional and 'interactive intersectionality', which focus on structuration as an ongoing multilevel process within different discursive and institutional contexts. She argues 'that particular political histories of interpreting and institutionalizing class, race and gender as abstract dimensions of inequality continue to shape gender discourse in interactively intersectional ways' (88). This approach emphasises that the dimensions of inequality are themselves dynamic and changing.

One crucial issue concerns the intersections of gender, diversity and (European) nationalism. Nira Yuval-Davis' approach to gender and nationality, citizenship and 'politics of belonging' is unique, since it has conceptualized multiple inequalities from a dual intersectional and a trans-national perspective (2007). Her proposal for a *transversal* approach to diversity, which aims to create strategic alliances between social and political actors, has a similar emphasis on horizontal and vertical communication and on the formation of new collective identities as Squires (Yuval-Davis 2006; 2007). Her approach is more sociological, since it links a structural/systemic approach to gender and race addressing power inequalities with a dynamic approach to intersectionality, which addresses conflicting interpretations about gender and ethnicity on the level of agency. The emphasis on politics of belonging beyond the nation state implies that human beings are members of multiple social and political communities. This transnational approach is a good starting point for studies of the democratic quality of the multilevel European system.

We argue that a dynamic, interactive and transnational version of intersectionality premised on differences, contestations and conflicts in the public sphere, for example about the meanings of gender equality and women's interests, based upon multiple differences and inequalities embedded within various discursive and institutional contexts, can be a valuable addition to the theory and practice of deliberative democracy (Christensen & Siim 2010; Rolandsen Agustín & Siim 2011; Mokre & Siim 2011).

To sum up: Deliberative democracy has been criticised for neglecting structural power relations, struggles and for ignoring the effects of intersecting inequalities, for example between gender and ethnicity/race. The power of Mouffe's approach is the conceptualization of conflicting interpretations of liberal-democratic values and differences between 'them and us' on the discursive level. The paper has argued that the 'intersectional turn' in feminist theory has potentials to overcome this bias of discourse theory and to rethink deliberation by adding conflicts and contestations at the level of institutions, discourse and social actors. Arguably a dynamic, interactive and transnational version of intersectionality has the potential to conceptualize differences and conflicts between gender and diversity in the European public sphere and to address conflicting interpretations, for example conflicts and contestations between women's organizations and organizations of minority groups.

Part 2: Gender and diversity in the European public sphere⁴

This part addresses the intersections of gender and diversity from the perspective of the transnational European public sphere (EPS). It first presents feminist approaches, which address the challenge from diversity for gender equality from a perspective of European democracy. Next, empirical findings about intersections of gender with ethnicity/race are discussed. The European 'turn to diversity' addresses discrimination according to gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, age and handicap, which has

⁴ For general reflections about diversity and the European public sphere see EUROSPPHERE working paper series. For specific reflections about diversity and gender see no. 17, 22, 24 and 30. <http://eurospheres.org/publications/working-papers-2/2009-2/>

provided new conditions for giving voice to diverse and marginalised social groups. The development of the EU polity, including the recent EU enlargement, has increased migration and diversity within the EU. It has made it easier for EU-nationals to move across borders but more difficult for 3rd country nationals to be included in the EU. In spite of EUs unique political-economic framework (Ferree 2011), the analysis of democratic conflicts and tensions in the European public sphere can contribute to rethink democratic theory and practice from an intersectional perspective.

Intersections of diversity and gender equality

The emphasis on the dual goal of diversity and gender equality in the European Public Sphere (EPS) has challenged gender research to develop models able to address inequalities in relation to gender and diversity, for example through the intersectionality approach. Feminist scholars have started to explore the challenges from multiple diversities for EU gender equality politics⁵ (Verloo 2006; 2007; Lombardo 2009) focusing on the contradictory logic of European integration. For example, gender equality can be threatened by diversity but at the same time Europeanization also represents new possibilities for gender equality, which has become part of a new transnational diversity agenda (Squires 2007).

The following presents two different approaches to gender Europeanisation from the perspective of deliberation: Ulrike Liebert's model seeks to overcome the European citizenship paradox by focusing on procedures of deliberative negotiations, which aim to *empower women as social and political actors* and to stimulate their political presence and influence in the public sphere (Liebert 2007). Judith Squires' model seeks to include gender in the European diversity model through an institutional intersectionality perspective, which emphasises the intersections of gender with other categories and aims to restructure *public institutions and public policies*, for example through gender and diversity mainstreaming (Squires 2007).

⁵ The intersectionality perspective has become key elements of the MAGEEQ and QUING-projects both funded by the European Commission (see Lombardo, Meier & Verloo 2009).

Ulrike Liebert (2007) has presented a comprehensive framework for gendering the European public sphere by restructuring democratic citizenship. This approach aims to shed light on the “European citizenship paradox” – to create equality between different European nationalities. This paradox emerges as a result of the tensions between EU citizenships norms – for example of equality and non-discrimination – and member-state practices in the context of regional disparities and social inequalities that market integration arguably deepens. The objective is to develop European citizenship to accommodate the gender paradox in the context of (multi)cultural diversity (14).

Assessing four transnational European citizenship models through the lens of gender equality Liebert argues that a purely liberal, republican or cosmopolitan citizenship model all appear to fail to resolve this paradox (15-19). She concludes that only a deliberative citizenship is able to overcome the European citizenship and gender paradox. *“From a feminist perspective, a deliberative European citizenship conception promises women and feminist movements an equal voice and, thus to do better than others in reconciling claims for individual equality and the needs for the protection of gender based difference”* (Liebert 2007: 19). The main focus is thus on women’s empowerment as social and political actors, and deliberative negotiation is interpreted as the best strategy to solve the conflicts between gender equality and cultural diversity minority groups.

Liebert’s deliberative model aims to stimulate citizens’ engagement in transnational debates about European issues through procedures of deliberation, stakeholder representation, participation in ongoing processes of negotiation (436). The emphasis in this approach to EU citizenship is the focus on the EU as a provider of gender and minority rights. It does not explore the limitations of EU-governance, the unequal power relations between women citizens and EU polity; the intersections of gender inequality and multiple inequalities and the unequal position between women’s groups and minority groups the EU.

Judith Squires’ (2007) intersectional model presents a more critical approach to the EPS. She observes that there is a new political emphasis in the EU away from an isolated focus on gender inequality

towards a growing concern to devise institutions and laws to address multiple inequalities, for example mainstreaming multiple inequalities (160). One illustration is Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty recognizing six strands as requiring measures to combat discrimination: *sex, racial and ethnic origin, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation*.⁶

In order to deal with multiple inequalities Squires' proposes a *participative-democratic model* based upon an *integrated approach* to gender and diversity mainstreaming, which is perceived as an alternative to mainstreaming processes based upon identity-politics (163-178): "*for without inclusive deliberation as to what gender equality entails – and therefore what form gender equality policies should take – the pursuit of gender equality can itself become an exclusionary process, undertaken for considerations of utility rather than justice*" (177-78).

Squires argues that the concept of intersectionality is more precise than the concept of diversity, because it focuses attention on the locations at which or processes by which marginalised groups experience not only multiple but also particular forms of inequalities. The intersectionality approach acknowledges the tensions and conflicts between gender equality and ethno-cultural diversity, which should be addressed by models, strategies and practical politics. Squires' deliberative intersectionality approach is fruitful, since the diversity agenda is not perceived as a threat to gender equality, but as a potential strategy to empower women who have not been part of the dominant gender equality discourses, for example immigrant, minority women.

We find that one of the main challenges for intersectional analyses is to understand and analyze the historical and contextual nature of social categories like gender, race/ethnicity, and class. The Eurosphere project offers an opportunity for a context-sensitive empirical analysis of intersectionality, which addresses inclusion/exclusion of women and minorities in the European Public Sphere (EPS). It analyses intersections of gender with ethno-national diversity on the one hand and gender and national majorities on the other hand.

⁶ Article 13 states that the "Council may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation". This was later included in the Treaty of Lisbon. For an analysis of European gender equality policies, see Lombardo, Meier & Verloo 2009.

Intersectionality in the Eurosphere Project

The Eurosphere project aims to contribute to the theoretical debate about the desirability and feasibility of the EPS based on empirical findings (see Mokre & Siim 2011). The idea of an EPS implies a radical break with the traditional understanding of public spheres as confined to nation states. It is contested if a public sphere beyond the borders of national democracy is feasible. And, if yes, the question arises how such a public sphere can deal with multiple diversities.

The European public sphere can be understood as a space of contestation (Risse 2003, Della Porta/Caiani 2010). Scholars have started to explore the political challenge of complex diversities within Europe (Kraus 2009) focusing on the specific character of European democracy and the European Public Sphere⁷. One example is Della Porta's study of Europeanisation of society 'from below' by NGO/SMOs in civil society which finds that Europeanisation by contestation has created multiple identities of individual, collective/group, national and transnational belongings (della Porta et.al. 2010).

The Eurosphere project addresses the relations between two key concepts: ethnic/national diversity and the EPS. Conceptually as well as empirically, also issues of gender and socio-economic differences were taken into account, although in a less prominent way than the focal issue of ethnic/ national diversity.⁸

⁷ The EC has supported a number of large research projects focusing on European democracy and the EPS, for example the Eurosphere-project. There is a link to many similar EC-projects focusing on democracy and the public sphere on the project's homepage, e.g. RECON, FEMCIT & DEMOS, see <http://eurospheres.org/publications/working-papers-2/2009-2/>

⁸ The empirical data for this article is mainly from elite interviews and organizational data from selected political parties and social movements/NGOs within the Eurosphere database. It includes a qualitative analysis of six selected women's organizations in Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Hungary, Turkey and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) (Garcia, Gonzalés & Veinger (2011) and an analysis of political parties and social movements in five different countries, Denmark, Bulgaria, Austria, Finland and Spain (Mokre and Pristed Nielsen 2010). Some of the findings presented here have already been published as EUROSHERE working papers, and journal articles. See Mokre & Siim, "Inclusion and Exclusion in the European Public Sphere. Intersections of Gender and Race" 2011. Rolandsen Augustin 2009, Mokre & Pristed Nielsen 2010, Pristed Nielsen 2010, Rolandsen Augustin & Pristed Nielsen 2011, Lozano, Garcia Gonzalés & Veinger 2011). Other findings will be published as part of Eurosphere Workpackage Reports.

In general, our empirical evidence suggests that intersections between ethnicity/nation and gender play a constitutive role in most discourses in the EPS. The overall picture confirms the importance of the interactions of gender with other social categories, especially ethnicity/race, for discourses about diversity and the EPS. Social and political actors formulate different forms of interactions between gender and ethnic minorities. These can be interpreted as different discursive framings, for example between *exclusionary and inclusionary intersectionality* (Rolandsen Agustin 2009; Christensen/Siim 2010). In our empirical research, we also found statements which cannot be clearly assigned to one or the other form of this intersectionality, which we have labelled *ambiguous intersectionality*. And also the explicit rejection of intersections between gender and ethnicity/nation forms a small part of our empirical results, *no interaction*.

This classification is an ex-post-evaluation of our empirical results introducing an analytical structure for the sake of clarity. In practice, there is fluidity in the ways political actors discuss intersections of gender and diversity: Different ways of framing intersectionality may be identified within one dominant discourse and alternative discourses often develop as reactions to dominant forms of dealing with ethnicity/race and gender. These discursive frames can only be indirectly deduced from our empirical material.

Exclusionary Intersectionality

Exclusionary intersectionality regards tensions between diversity and equality as unsolvable and thus proposes a radical, one-dimensional solution – either to reduce or abolish a specific form of diversity or to abandon claims for equality. In this vein, state-nationalist parties and NGOs emphasize the disadvantages of diversity, above all with regard to gender equality (Van de Beek/Vermeulen 2010, 14). In our empirical results, such disadvantages were - implicitly or explicitly - nearly exclusively mentioned with regard to Muslim minorities.

“There are many national minorities in Europe and this is the richness of the European society that all these groups live together. We also have a common denominator which is Christianity as our common cultural heritage, secularity and the ancient Greece. The Islamic culture is very different in terms of the understanding of life and of justice -lack of

democracy, human rights and gender equality.” (Danish Association, quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 12)

Some interviewees focus on gender injustice within minorities as another Danish example shows:

“I observe that some people who come here have a totally different conception from the common Danish one of the relationship between the genders. For example, demands for how to dress and cover up. Especially within the Islamic world we see a notion that women are in second place, there is no equality as we see it within Denmark.” (quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 12)

In other cases, negative implications for majority women are the main concern:

“You know, women are engaging with [...] Africans, Turks, Arabs, Egyptians [...] and then they have domestic problems. They are restricted in their individual liberty and their freedom of movement.” (Good Bye Mosque, Austria, quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 11)

While - little surprisingly - most examples for exclusionary intersectionality were found in interviews with nationalist organisations, this attitude can also be found within gender NGOs: Nearly 20 percent of the interviewed representatives of gender NGOs understood ethnic/national diversity as a threat to gender equality. And it seems interesting within this context that the French and Greek members of the European Women’s Lobby (EWL) aimed at excluding the Turkish gender group KADER by arguing that the participation of KADER would mean the acceptance of women wearing a headscarf in the EWL⁹ (Arribas Lozano/Kutay 2010).

On the other hand, we could find at least one example for – partly – sacrificing (gender) equality in favour of diversity within our data. Seeing differences in the way different communities deal with women’s rights, a member of the Finnish nationalist party starts to raise doubts if the Western model of gender equality is really the best model for every society:

⁹ However, KADER has become a member of EWL.

“(W)omen’s position is quite different in Western countries than it is in Africa or even in Asia. (...) But is, for example, some Western model of thought or way of life and our model of (gender) equality then for the best somewhere else? I don’t know. I haven’t been thinking about it in those terms.” (quoted after Mokre/ Nielsen 2010, 22).

Inclusionary intersectionality

Inclusionary intersectionality perceives both equality and diversity as positive values and does not understand them as fundamentally irreconcilable. Within this discourse, we find two sub-discourses:

1. an emphasis on the intersection between different inequality creating mechanisms and the potential negative implications for strengthening inequality (in diversity) (multiple discrimination approach)
2. the acknowledgement of tensions between equality and diversity with a focus on the possibility to overcome these tensions by learning (mutual learning approach).

Multiple Discrimination Approach

This attitude is probably most clearly formulated by a member of a Danish left-wing party:

“When integration fails, it hits the ethnic women twice as hard because they typically come (...) from societies where they are repressed already in relation to the norms which apply in this society. This means that they enter a pocket where they are repressed both in terms of their nationality but also in terms of their gender.” (quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 23).

Many of our interviewees, especially from immigrant/anti-racist as well as women’s organisations and from regional national minorities share this view. Thereby, respondents from members of the European Network for Anti-Racism (ENAR) unequivocally stand for the non-hierarchy of reasons for discrimination:

“We try not to organize discrimination into a hierarchy; we have always advocated the non-hierarchy of grounds.” (quoted after Pristed Nielsen 2010, 14)

The non-hierarchical understanding of discriminations is not as overall shared within gender NGOs. Besides the above mentioned cases of exclusionary intersectionality in gender organisations, representatives of women's organisations tend to use an anti-discrimination discourse privileging gender as this example out of an interview with a representative of EWL shows:

“And the thing is that of course I am in favour of diversity, but I am not in favour of diversity if gender is not taken into consideration.” (quoted after Pristed Nielsen 2010, 14)

This position is also represented by an interviewee of the Turkish NGO KAMER and by members of the Bulgarian WAD and the Danish Women's Council. Still, this attitude cannot be generalized – not even within one organisation. Another representative of the Danish Women's Council states:

“As a starting point, there should be no categories which take precedence. Some say gender cuts across, and perhaps this is true, but turning it into the most important - I wouldn't go so far” (quoted after Pristed Nielsen 2010, 14).

And also two interviewees of WAD spoke against privileging grounds for discrimination while a representative of KAMER stated:

“We essentially base our policies on the multiple identity of individuals.” (quoted after Pristed Nielsen 2010, 14)

Summarizing, one can state for the NGOs in our sample:

“(...)It is interesting (and statistically significant) that it is only respondents from women's groups who prioritize gender equality. Another observation is that particularly respondents from ENAR, but also from its two member organizations TGD and the Anti-Racist Center, are internally very consistent in their replies. In contrast, respondents from EWL (...) are mutually rather far from each other, advocating either the priority of gender concerns, other types of identity affiliation, or the non-hierarchy of grounds. (...) Although the evidence is meagre, it seems that questions of policy priorities on group rights are an unresolved issue within the EWL organizations.” (Pristed Nielsen 2010, 15)

This problem in dealing with the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity can also be traced in differences between the rhetoric and activities of EWL: While EWL's respondents articulate gender as

the primary concern of the organization, their projects show a distinct focus on intersectional gender and race projects. This focus has developed parallel to the shift of official EU policies from gender equality to an increased concern with diversity and multiple inequalities. Thus, in spite of their personal opinions, EWL representatives emphasize that the organization has developed during the last 10 years from a white woman's organizations which privileged gender equality to an organization addressing multiple, intersection inequalities and organizing immigrant women and their concerns within the organization.

For the political parties in our project, discriminations due to ethnicity/ race or gender and their intersections played, in general, a much less important role than for the NGOs. This does not come as a surprise as we selected NGOs according to their interest in ethnicity/race or gender. However, it is interesting that also in the case of political parties it is always the category of gender which is seen as the more important one when a hierarchy is mentioned at all. This holds true for representatives of parties of different ideology in Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Finland. Partly, this could be due to the fear that diversity issues become more prominent nowadays than gender issues as a member of the Finnish conservative party explicitly mentioned (cf. Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 22).

Mutual Learning Approach

This position could be found in various national and transnational discourses, in pro- and anti-diversity organisations, in political parties of all political orientations as well as in interviews with representatives of the media:

"I think that those values [self-determination and independency of women] we have in Europe are so great, we can't impart those values fast enough to them [immigrant women]. (...) I think it is an advantage [...] women coming from other countries can adapt and they can inform themselves about their rights. They can learn, they can develop."
(Austrian movement "Good Bye Mosque, quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 8).

Similar positions could be found in nationalist parties, e.g. in Bulgaria and Finland as well as in the social-democratic parties of Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Finland (cf. Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010,

22-23). Also, a journalist of the conservative Hungarian newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* shared this position (cf. Selmeczi/ Sata 2010, 23).

Sometimes, the possibility of positive change is combined with a critique of certain minority groups, notably Muslims, and, thus, with a form of exclusionary intersectionality:

“In a society where the Christian cultural model dominates, women and men have equal rights. A cultural community cannot separate itself, differentiate and humiliate women’s rights because all are the citizens of the country and should obey some rules. (...) in some cultural models, for example in the Muslim religion, women’s rights and men’s rights are not the same ones. Women are humiliated in their rights.” (quoted after Mokre/Pristed Nielsen 2010, 23).

While this is a quotation by a member of the Bulgarian nationalist ATAKA party, we could find similar opinions of Bulgarian Social-Democrats.

These positions share the common perspective that immigrants should take over concepts of gender justice from majority societies. A similar model has sometimes been applied to the EU Member and Candidate States where, in general, the Nordic model is seen as an ideal for which other states have to strive. As Pristed Nielsen and Rolandsen Agustin (2011, 5) show for Denmark, Northern states tend to define gender justice, at the same time, as a national and a European value. Some interviewees from Spain, on the other hand, claim for an adaptation of their country to the Northern standard (Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 16).

A similar position is represented by a journalist from the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* – although s/he has a much more sceptical view of the status of gender justice in the EU:

“If the EU countries can solve these problems within themselves first then they can perhaps disseminate certain norms in this area. ... They need to solve [problems] about sexism, they have not solved yet. They need to solve the migrant problems in their countries.” (quoted after Selmeczi/Sata 2010, 16)

Especially in Denmark, however, we could also find positions not subscribing to this one-way-understanding of 'learning from European values' but rather proposing a mutual approach:

"I think we could achieve a lot more by trying to understand more and through the dialogue. [...] We have never gone out to say a lot against veils [...]. We prefer to talk with people and figure out where we have something in common as women in Denmark." (Women's Council in Denmark, quoted after: Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 8).

In a slightly different way – implying that rules of gender equality might be adapted in order to accommodate minority views, a Finnish Social-Democrat claims, "that our society must adapt to the new groups but also vice versa, to meet somewhere mid-way." (quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010,22) Yet from another perspective, a member of the Finnish conservative party sees it as an advantage of ethnic diversity that it raises awareness of still existing inequalities in the majority population (cf. Mokre/Pristed Nielsen 2010, 24).

In our data on Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland, we could also find the more general argument that ethno-national diversity leads to more tolerance which can then lead towards more gender justice.

Ambiguous Intersectionality

Some of our interviewees held the position that diversity both furthers and hinders equality. Most clearly, this is formulated by the representative of the Bulgarian NGO OJB Shalom:

"Ethno-national diversity should contribute to women's rights and gender equality, but it is not realized everywhere. [...] Respect between genders and gender equality is realized if the ethnic group is intelligent and cultured."

While this statement rather implies a devaluation of certain ethnic groups, respondents from a Danish Muslim NGO claim for more mutual respect of ethnic/national groups also with regard to their approach to gender issues:

“The Danish debate [about immigrant women] is very un-nuanced and often based on ignorance, clichés and prejudices [...] it is like it is not respectable to be a housewife here [...] there is lack of mutual recognition.” (Democratic Muslims, quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 7)

It seems plausible that ambivalence in this regard is, at least, partly due to the blurredness of the term gender equality opening up the possibility for different interpretations.

No Interaction

Some representatives of NGOs and political parties in Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland held this position. Most prominently, it could be found among interviewees of the ‘Austrian Poverty Conference’ where three respondents answered in a way exemplified by one quotation:

“That [diversity] does not mean at all that [...] women are automatically in a worse position.”

Similarly, an interviewee of the Bulgarian ‘Women’s Alliance for Development’ states:

“When we speak about women’s rights, we must not speak about national diversity. The women are women everywhere, independently of the role determined for them by religion, policy or economic situation. A women’s community could fight for equal rights independently of the ethnic background”. (quoted after Mokre/ Pristed Nielsen 2010, 6-7).

Summary

The results presented in this paper provide an interesting qualitative picture of perceptions of intersectionality by important actors within the EPS representing selected political parties and social

movements/NGOs across Europe. These findings are mainly explorative and can contribute to refine the intersectionality approach in empirical analysis of gender and ethnicity/race.

However, our results clearly illustrate that those political actors who address issues about ethnic/national diversity and gender, all formulate discursive framings of how the two interact. This even holds true for those who explicitly reject this perspective, which indicates that they feel the need to do so. Notably, this prominence only holds true for intersections between ethnicity and gender. The third part of the classical triad class, gender, race, i.e. class, or, socio-economic differences, is rarely ever mentioned by our interviewees. This result corresponds with EU and national policies and discourses frequently excluding questions of social and economic inequality.

The ways in which the relation between diversity and gender are understood and framed are contextual and depend on various institutional and discursive frameworks. National histories and institutions are important factors in this regard. In some European countries gender equality has become a dominant national value, which is used by both the Left and the Right as a national demarcation to construct a borderline between ‚us and them‘, for example in the Nordic countries (Christensen & Siim 2010). A number of national discourses explicitly exclude the unequal immigrant other, while other national counter discourses aim to include the unequal immigrant other (Pristed Nielsen/Siim 2010). These discourses also express interactions of majority and minorities. A prominent figure here is the excluded other (woman) symbolizing an intersection of gender with ethnicity/race/culture or religion used to emphasize the difference between them and us: ‘The minority oppresses women whereas we the majority are gender equal.’ On the other hand, we can find the – potentially – included other (woman) standing for a more dynamic interaction between gender equality, ethnicity and culture and symbolized, e.g., by ‘young immigrant girls as bearers of integration’ (Rolandsen Agustín/Siim 2010).

While the inclusion of immigrant women is an important concern for immigrant and anti-racist organizations, the coupling of gender and ethnicity/race was not articulated as a dominant concern in

the selected women's organizations (Arribas Lozano/ Garzia-Conzález & Veinguer, 2011). Still, the reference to diversity and pluralism play an important role for women's organizations. Conservative women's organizations use this discourse, in order to get their voices heard in the European Parliament, and ethnic minority women use it in order to be included within majority women's organizations like the EWL (Rolandsen Agustin, 2008). New alliances between majority and minority women and their organizations have also developed, for example within the EWL, and between EWL and Black Women's Organisations. Thus, our results suggest that ethnic diversity is an important concern for women's organizations but that, up to now, they have not found a common language on this issue whereas anti-racist movements unequivocally claim the equal importance of ethnicity and gender.

Political families also still play an important role, especially with regard to party discourses, although there are new patterns and conflicts between the Centre/Left and the new Right and also cases of surprising congruence between parties of all political orientations. There also tend to be new religious cleavages, i.e. between conservative Catholic forces and secular forces.

Finally, the concrete aims of organizations – above all NGOs – and the specific context in which they are operating play an important role. This is of special importance if we bear in mind that many of the interviewees framed intersections between gender and ethnic diversity above all with regard to Muslim communities. Concrete positions on Islam in the EU, however, do not only depend on a general pro- or anti-diversity outlook but, e.g., also on the religious convictions of an organization as can most clearly be seen in the case of the Jewish organization OJB Shalom in Bulgaria. Thus, comparisons according to different countries, political families, pro-/anti-diversity positions etc. are only possible to a very limited degree.

Conclusions

This paper aims to analyse the intersections of gender and diversity in the European public sphere and thereby contribute to rethink deliberation and democracy from an intersectionality perspective. The

main argument is that a model for inclusive democracy at the (trans)national level needs to take into account multiple differences and inequalities between (minority and majority) groups as well as conflicting interpretations of key notions of public debate such as 'gender equality' and 'women's interests'.

Arguably it is both possible and desirable to rethink democracy from the dual perspective of diversity and trans-nationalism. On a theoretical level there is a need for a comprehensive theory able to integrate deliberation, contestation and conflicts within the public sphere on the level of discourse and institutions. The strength of the deliberative approach lies in the emphasis on the inclusion of women and marginalized social groups. The approach has, however, failed to address multiple inequalities, differences and conflicts between civil society actors and political institutions as well as within social and political groups.

Mouffe's alternative approach emphasises conflicts, struggle and antagonism at the level of discourse but it lacks an empirical focus able to address conflicts and contestations within and between women and marginalised social groups. Adding an intersectionality dimension is a way to conceptualise heterogeneity and differences within and between political, cultural and social groups, civil society actors and NGOs.

Scholars have characterised the European public sphere as a site of contestation of dominant discourses - as well as deliberation, negotiation and cooperation among civil society organizations. The empirical results from the Eurosphere project allow some conclusions with regard to the EPS, although limited to our concrete question for intersectionality. First of all, we can observe vivid and transnational debates on this issue which are mainly driven by civil society, i.e. by different NGOs. Secondly, we could also see that these debates form discourses in the sense of Laclau/Mouffe, i.e. that they evolve around a common – contested – theme. Many of the positions we found can be understood as agonistic in the wording of Mouffe in that they represent different positions without, however, excluding the opinion of the respective other. However, we also find antagonistic elements.

These are most obvious in the framework of exclusionary intersectionality defining some social groups as unable to become an integral part of society. But, obviously, there are also antagonisms between exclusionary and inclusionary understandings of intersectionality. If the public sphere is a space of contestation, all these findings point towards the possible emergence of European Public Spheres dealing with issues of importance for the political present and future.

However, this positive evaluation leaves us with many open questions. As the European public spheres we found are still relatively small and specific, their impact on citizenry at large as well as on the political system remains limited. Eurosphere reports¹⁰ illustrate that for most political parties as well as media representatives, gender and diversity issues played a much less prominent role than for NGOs. The reports further illustrate that the issues were not dealt with by think-tank-representatives, which arguably play an important role for policy making in many countries. And it was virtually invisible in the media content analysis.

Thus, the question arises if this form of an EPS can serve as a linkage between the citizens and the political institutions or remains confined to a relatively small, although transnational, group of interested people and organizations. If this is the case – as our results suggest – then, we lack here two paramount features of classical public spheres, namely inclusiveness and accountability.

Inclusiveness means the possibility for everyone concerned to take part in the public sphere. In a representative democracy, this participation can also take place in an indirect way, namely via representative organizations. However, for the main representative organizations of contemporary democracies, namely political parties, ethnicity and gender seem to play a subordinate role.

¹⁰ See Arribas Lozano, A./ Kutay, A. 2010, "SMOs/NGOs' Role in the Articulation of the European Public Sphere", *Eurosphere Task Group Report 5.3.*, Selmeczi./ Sata 2010, "Missing the European Public Sphere. Doubts of Prominent Journalists in Five European Countries. Comparative qualitative analysis of selected Eurosphere media representative interviews". *Eurosphere Task Group Report 5.4.3.* and Remacle, E./ Sciortino, G./ Dressler, W./ Barani, L. (2010), "Think Tanks", *Eurosphere Task Group Report 5.1.*

Furthermore, per definition, they do not represent non-citizens. Most non-citizens who as residents are part of this general public are, thus, neither represented by political parties for which they are not allowed to vote nor by NGOs to which they also do not have a formal link.

When public spheres do not provide links between citizens and the political institutions, issues of accountability and legitimacy are challenged. This problem is aggravated by the multitude of differentiations between positions on ethnicity and gender due to national and political differences, discursive contexts and the aims of the respective NGOs. The lack of meaningful classifications is not only a problem for comparative research but, probably even more so, for overcoming ethno-national differences in the EPS and warranting equal political opportunities.

The tragic event on July 22 in Norway illustrates the seriousness of these issues and emphasises that the crucial task for democratic politics is to create conditions for transforming existing antagonisms for example between the Extremist Right wing organizations and the Muslim population into agonistic conflicts instead of letting them explode into violent action.

In sum, we have found common discursive patterns on the intersections between ethnicity and gender which, however, can at best be interpreted as a sign for the emergence of broader European public spheres. Only if these debates can be generalized, European public spheres fulfilling the classical functions of this concept can develop.

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